

he was one of the first—I will tell you an interesting story.

I was airborne on Air Force One and put our—on September the 11th—and put our troops to a high-alert status. And one of the first phone calls I got through my national security office was from Vladimir Putin, announcing that he has stood his troops down—which is significant. In the old days, if we'd have put our troops on heightened alert, they would have put their troops on more heightened alert—[laughter]—which would have caused our troops to go on higher alert. And all of a sudden we would have had a conflict, a potential conflict out of the realm of the incident that caused the troops to go on alert.

So he quickly called and said, “We’re standing our troops down.” It’s a new attitude toward relationship. He understands the cold war is over, and so do I, which provides great opportunity for not only America but Germany to work with Mr. Putin for our nations’ interests and his nation’s interests.

And I think we’re going to find a lot of common ground, one of which will be to fight terrorism. But as I explained to him, it’s going to be hard to have common ground if he represses the press and/or treats minorities within his own country in a way that the Western world simply doesn’t understand.

Listen, thank you all for coming. Thank you, Chancellor, I appreciate you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to anthrax victim Robert Stevens; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. He also referred to the Report by the Sharm al-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, which was chaired by former Senator George J. Mitchell. Chancellor Schroeder spoke in German, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Proclamation 7483—Leif Erikson Day, 2001

October 9, 2001

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On Leif Erikson Day, we join our friends in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden to celebrate and pay homage to our shared ideals and commemorate the contributions of Nordic Americans to our culture. We honor the explorers who led the first Viking explorations at the beginning of the last millennium, and we pay tribute to the many Nordic pioneers who helped to explore and settle America’s 19th Century frontiers. The Nordic and American peoples share the virtues of courage, resourcefulness, and self-reliance, and they have built nations based on the principles of liberty, justice, and equality.

Leif Erikson and his men braved the unknown and risked their lives to become the first Europeans to set foot on North American soil. As we reflect upon Erikson’s groundbreaking achievements and marvel at the adversity and dangers he and his explorers endured, we are thankful for their great endeavor and recognize that achieving difficult goals requires people who are courageous and willing to sacrifice, who take action and take risks.

Today, American researchers and entrepreneurs, including many of Nordic descent, are making landmark discoveries in the fields of genetics, information technology, biotechnology, and renewable energy. Through our Northern European Initiative and the “Northern Dimension” program that Scandinavian countries have sponsored, we are deepening our cooperation and connections with the Baltic region, building regional links in Northwest Russia, and renewing historic trade relationships. And, we are working closely with our Nordic Allies in NATO by helping to provide for the region’s common defense and stability. These and other efforts

to improve the world mark the citizens of the United States as a people possessing virtues that echo those of Leif Erikson and the first Vikings who landed on our northern shores.

To honor Leif Erikson, the brave son of Iceland and grandson of Norway, and our Nordic American heritage, the Congress, by joint resolution (Public Law 88–66) approved on September 2, 1964, has authorized and requested the President to proclaim October 9 of each year as Leif Erikson Day.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 9, 2001, as Leif Erikson Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs to honor our rich Nordic-American heritage.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-sixth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., October 11, 2001]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 12.

**Executive Order 13229—
Amendment to Executive Order
13045, Extending the Task Force on
Environmental Health Risks and
Safety Risks to Children**

October 9, 2001

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to extend the Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, it is hereby ordered that Executive Order 13045 of April 21, 1997, is amended by deleting in section 3–306 of that order “for a period of 4 years from the first meeting” and

inserting in lieu thereof “for 6 years from the date of this order”.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 9, 2001.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:54 a.m., October 10, 2001]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 11.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Reporting on Combat Action in
Afghanistan Against Al Qaida
Terrorists and Their Taliban
Supporters**

October 9, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

At approximately 12:30 p.m. (EDT) on October 7, 2001, on my orders, U.S. Armed Forces began combat action in Afghanistan against Al Qaida terrorists and their Taliban supporters. This military action is a part of our campaign against terrorism and is designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations.

We are responding to the brutal September 11 attacks on our territory, our citizens, and our way of life, and to the continuing threat of terrorist acts against the United States and our friends and allies. This follows the deployment of various combat-equipped and combat support forces to a number of locations in the Central and Pacific Command areas of operations, as I reported to the Congress on September 24, to prepare for the campaign to prevent and deter terrorism.

I have taken these actions pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. It is not possible to know at this time either the duration of combat operations or the scope and duration of the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States. As I have stated previously, it is likely that the American campaign against terrorism will be lengthy. I will direct such additional measures as necessary in exercise of